

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Kaibab National Forest
Tusayan Ranger District



Q1: Is it unusual for the Forest Service to receive a request for access across National Forest?

A1: No. It is common for the Forest Service to work with the owners of private inholdings that are surrounded by or adjacent to National Forest lands. We often receive proposals for various kinds of permits and easements, and there is a process in place for evaluating those proposals.

Q2: Doesn't the fact that the proponent (the Town of Tusayan) will be paying for the cost of the environmental review indicate that the Forest Service will decide in the Town's favor?

A2: No. It is Forest Service policy for applicants for special use authorizations to pay for the processing of their applications. This fact holds no sway over the final decision to approve or deny the easement request.

Q3: Why isn't an environmental impact statement rather than an environmental assessment being prepared? Isn't an environmental impact statement the appropriate level of analysis for a proposal like this?

A3: We are in the initial stages of the environmental analysis process. It is premature to define the level of environmental analysis required until we complete scoping of the proposed action. Based on scoping and/or subsequent analysis, the Forest Service will determine whether an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is appropriate.

Q4: Isn't it true that Stilo Development Group and/or the Town of Tusayan selected the third-party consultant to prepare the environmental analysis, and isn't that a conflict of interest?

A4: The consultant is chosen solely by and serves under the direct supervision of the Forest Service.

Q5: What is the name of the third-party consultant, and how can I find out more about them?

A5: WestLand Resources, Inc., is the third-party consultant that will prepare the environmental analysis. Additional information is available on their website at www.westlandresources.com.

Q6: Why is the Town of Tusayan the applicant for the easements?

A6: Per the Forest Service Manual, Southwestern Region (Region 3) Supplement 2700-2009-1 directive 2732.3, the Forest Service can only grant an easement to a public road management agency, or road users or improvement district, of the affected landowners.

Q7: I heard that the Forest Service generally prohibits private property access roads from passing through the National Forest if there's another access point available. Why can't that happen in this case?

A7: That doesn't apply in this case because the only access to the privately-owned Kotzin Ranch and Ten-X properties is through National Forest.

Q8: The easements are proposed to access private properties within the forest that were zoned by the Town of Tusayan for residential and commercial uses. How will the impacts of the potential development of these private inholdings be addressed?

A8: The Forest Service will analyze direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of granting the easements to the Town of Tusayan. While it is not within the Forest Service scope of authority to approve or deny development on private property, an analysis of the development itself will be included in the environmental review, per the requirements of The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Forest Service regulations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (continued)



Q9: Who authorized the development?

A9: The private land is within the Town of Tusayan town limits, therefore the development has been authorized by the Town of Tusayan through their planning and zoning process. Information is available on the Town's website at www.tusayan-az.gov. The Forest Service does not have the authority to authorize or deny the development or zoning of private property. The Forest Service does have the authority to approve the easements as requested, approve easements with modifications to the proposed improvements, or leave access as it exists.

Q10: How will the proposed roadway and utility easements affect the Grand Canyon?

A10: The potential effects on the Grand Canyon of the requested roadway and utility easements will be identified, analyzed and disclosed in the NEPA document. This includes potential effects to seeps and springs, which have been a concern for many individuals and groups. Comments received during scoping will help inform the issues analysis.

Q11: How long will this process take? I heard it could be a year before there is a decision.

A11: It is difficult to put an exact timeline on an environmental analysis process because it depends on the issues raised, level of analysis, and a variety of other factors. However, in this case, it is estimated that an environmental assessment would take about a year to complete, and an environmental impact statement would take longer than that.

Q12: How do I ensure I have the opportunity to be involved in the process and review any NEPA documentation?

A12: To sign up to receive notification of the availability of project documentation, please send an email to Kaibab National Forest project lead Deirdre McLaughlin at damclaughlin@fs.fed.us. Updates are also available on the Kaibab National Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/goto/TusayanEasement.

Q13: Can the Forest Service decide to not grant the proposed easements?

A13: Yes. The Forest Service can select the "no action" alternative and not grant the proposed easements. The Forest Service is required to allow reasonable access to private inholding properties such as Kotzin Ranch and Ten-X Ranch. As part of the NEPA analysis, it will be determined if there is existing reasonable access to the properties. If there is existing reasonable access, the Forest Service can decide to not grant the proposed easements.

Q14: Do my comments matter?

A14: Yes. Public involvement is a critical component of the NEPA process. Among other benefits, public comment assists the Forest Service in identifying the full breadth of public issues and concerns.

Q15: How can I comment on the project?

A15: There are many ways to comment on the project. Commenting options are available through the project NEPA website at www.fs.usda.gov/project/?project=46776. Comments are requested by June 2, 2015.